INTERVIEW WITH MRS. MARJORIE COOLEY

February 26, 1977

Conducted by:

Dr. James L. Dodson

--and--

Miss Paula Boyer

Dodson: Mrs. Cooley, I wonder if you would give us your full name and tell us how long you've lived in the valley?

Cooley: Marjorie Isabella Vanderlip [?] Cooley. We came from Portland, Oregon in 1924, February, which is more than fifty years ago.

Dodson: Mrs. Cooley, I wonder if you'd tell us how you happen to come to Van Nuys in the first place?

Cooley: In 1918, my father and brother had the terrible flu at that time. And due to their health, they decided in 1919 to come to Van Nuys because my father's sister lived here. And my father and brother came down here on the train, visited my aunt's family on Friar Street in Van Nuys. In 1924 then, the family moved to Van Nuys because of my aunt's family being here.

Dodson: Mrs. Cooley, I wonder if you'd tell us what sort of business your father was in when he first came?

Cooley: My father was an electrician, he was an electrical contractor in Portland, Oregon. And we came here to Van Nuys and he worked with my uncle, who was George Alexander Chapman, the building contractor. And my father did the electrical work when my uncle did the building.

Dodson: I see. Can you tell us something about your early education in Van Nuys? What school did you go to? And do you remember some of the names of your teachers?

Cooley: I went to Van Nuys Grammar School. It wasn't called

Van Nuys Elementary at that time, but the Grammar School, which is the same area, the same name, the same place that the Van Nuys Elementary School is now. The principal of that year was Miss Oletha Stearns, that was her first semester as principal there. I started in there in the third grade, because I had gone to school in Portland before that. My teacher's name was Anna Zerintzki [sp ?]. And the interesting part about it was that all four Cooley children also had Miss Zerintzki [?] When they went to school.

Dodson: Those are your children?

Cooley: Those are our four children, yes. And another teacher that I had was Esther Myers [sp?]. And I know Esther Myers's daughter who is now Cornelia McCartney. Another teacher was Hazel Harding. Hazel and I are members of the Sunset Seniors Club. And she said, "Marjorie, you're too young to be in this." And I said, "That's all right, I lie about my age."

Dodson: Now, was that school the large dome building?

Cooley: Yes it was. It looked like a capitol building.

Dodson: Can you tell us what happened to that building, finally?

Cooley: After the 1933 earthquake, it was condemned and replaced with the one story building, and also the satellite buildings outside, that weren't there when I was a little girl.

Dodson: That was a two-story building then, wasn't it?

Cooley: Yes, uh hmm.

Boyer: Was the dome on top of the two-stories?

Cooley: Yes.

Boyer: Then it must've been ...?...

Dodson: Was any use made of the dome? Were there any rooms inside the dome?

Cooley: I never was there, I don't know.

Dodson: I see. Did you look up from the first floor? Was there an open place?

Cooley: No, no. There was the auditorium, it took about one-half of that front building, because you could enter from the upstairs as well as the downstairs. And there were just seats and seats. It was just like the opera house in New York, to me. I haven't seen anything like that before and it was really something wonderful to see.

Dodson: Do you remember what sort of thing you studied at that time? When you were in elementary school?

Cooley: I...

Dodson: Since you've had children in school yourself, have you felt that their courses are different from yours in elementary school in any way? That they learned differently?

Cooley: I hope they have, I'm sure they must have. I hope

things have progressed. I remember what the children studied as Dick and Jane books in my day, the stories were about William and Robert, not Bobby and Billy. They always used the full name.

Dodson: Was reading taught differently? Have you been able to see any difference?

Cooley: I taught my children to read before the schools get to them. And they did very nicely in reading. All of them did nicely in reading.

Dodson: Were there any discipline problems in elementary school in your day?

Cooley: No.

Dodson: Did kids do any devilment?

Cooley: I suppose they did. And I suppose they did a lot of things. But I really was kind of a sissy and I was a very good girl.

Dodson: This would've been in the 20's right?

Cooley: Yes.

Dodson: Paula, do you have any questions?

Boyer: Uh, no. Not if you're going to ...?... Could you tell us about the high school, too? What happened?

Cooley: Oh yes, I went to Van Nuys Junior High and Van Nuys High School. The junior high and the high school at that time were over here on Cedros and it was in the

same building, all six years. And one interesting thing is in 1928 Ed Stannard who was a very popular teacher died. And I don't remember what the circumstances were. But in honor of his death, they planted a little redwood tree in between the auditorium and the main building, which is there now, it wasn't the same building. But this little tree has grown up to quite a good size redwood tree in all the years since 1928. But I was there when it was just a sapling.

Boyer: The school's auditorium there was damaged in the earthquake, too, right?

Cooley: Yes.

Boyer: Uh huh.

Cooley: The high school was a beautiful building. It had Greek columns out in front and it was lovely. They had a big cement walkway around the quad in front, that was where I learned how to skate! And in the quad was a sundial. And it was a very beautiful place in front with the two Greek, Grecian urns and the seats in circular places out in front. And it really was a lovely imposing building. In 1933, on March 15th, we had that earthquake. They blamed it on Long Beach but it shook us very nicely, too. And the building was damaged to the extent that we were no longer able to use the auditorium in that building. I'd forgotten if we used some of the building. I remember that the... what is now the science building in Van Nuys High, was a year old and we used that as a study hall, and a homeroom in that building. So that was the new building and

it's still standing. Everything else since then have disappeared. All of the old side buildings, teh cafeteria, the old gym, the ...?... has all been replaced by now. Except this one building that was a year old. It was being finished in 1932. And due to the earthquake, our class was the first one who was not able to graduate from Van Nuys High School. We went and walked down the street, down Haynes Street to Vesper, to the Christian Church. And from that auditorium, from that sanctuary there we had our graduation services.

Dodson: Is that 1933 then?

Cooley: 1933.

Dodson: And we mentioned, before we began the recording, the organ that was in the high school. Can you tell us a little bit about how that was used? What sort of assemblies you had?

Cooley: Oh, we had wonderful assemblies when I was a little girl. The organist was a graduate of Van Nuys High School, too, and his name was John Sayre. And John used to play the organ. And when I was about in eleventh grade, I was on the stage crew, which was a prestigious uhm... some people have majored in glee club and other things, but I kind of majored that year anyway, in stage crew. And I was the only one in the class that got an A because I was the one that the teacher could depend on. They wanted an assembly and somebody to be at the assembly, they'd call on Marjorie because Marjorie would be there when she was supposed to. And we used to do all sorts of deviltry, and bothered poor John Sayre when he was trying to perform. And we would hide

up... oh, he would go, oh, he was furious! He would go downstairs to get the principal to come up. And in the meantime we were up in the flies, up above in the stage... stage ...?... So by the time the principal came back, there was nobody around. Ha ha ha... But the organ at that time was put into storage, apparently. And now, used once in a while. It's in need of a repair, I've read. But it's still there at Van Nuys High School in the new covered auditorium.

Dodson: What sort of programs were usually given in the auditorium? Do you remember?

Cooley: All sorts of things. Yes, and musicals. Oh, they did fine with musicals. And they had a real nice glee club that did the musicals. And the interesting thing that I showed you the article about the first Van Nuys Mirror, which was the school's newspaper. Alice Wernlund was mentioned. And Alice Wernlund was still the singing teacher when I was there, in the glee club, too. But I didn't have the kind of a voice to be in the programs. But they... it was all moon and June and spoon, and that sort of thing. Nowadays they do adult plays and musicals in adult manner. The language isn't as appropriate as before when they were in moon and June and spoon days.

Dodson: Ha ha ha...

Cooley: That's what they do now, they didn't in those days.

Dodson: Uhm...

Boyer: Oh, I'm sorry. I just don't know... oh, o.k. I

just wanted to know if you could tell us some of the social life that you had as a teenager then, in high school?

Cooley: When I was a little girl, when I was twelve, they started a Job's Daughters Chapter at Van Nuys. My father was a Mason. So I was a charter member of Bethel 80 and that was, actually, my social life. This was during the Depression. And we didn't have money to do a lot of things, but this was an inexpensive way and the girls were... we were all about in the same boat. It wasn't they had some real wealthy people and we had some real poor people, we were all about the same. And our social life consisted of the in-groups parties and a lot of it was with De Molay boys, the De Molay Chapter of Van Nuys. And one of the things we used to enjoy is going over to uh... what Sunland? And Tujunga! Tujunga! There was a couple who had stones, river-stones houses, it looks more like a castle. And we used to go over there and have the most fabulous parties! At this couple's... it was an older couple but they let the young folks in there, marvelous parties over there. The sports that we used to do, we would play basketball games with different uhm... other Bethels.

Boyer: Uh hmm.

Cooley: And we'd go to Pacific Boys' Home. And that, uhm, you'd hardly ever hear anything about Pacific Boys' Home which is in Encino. But that was an active thing and so most of our social life developed around that. We had plays at school, musicals, uh... I don't think they had dances. I don't remember dances.

But it was a nice idea for girls my age, because as I say, we didn't have money to do other things. When I was still in high school, they put in the Reseda Plunge, that Reseda Park was filled up. The plunge had been put in and we all would go there swimming. It was inexpensive. I've forgotten what it was, but it was quite inexpensive to go swimming there. So the brother of one of my friends had a car and he would often drive us over there to go swimming. Another thing, my girlfriend, my best friend, was Nina Pearl Rudolph [sp. ?] Nina lived at 5940 Fulton Avenue, which is at the campus at Valley College.

Dodson: Oh.

Cooley: And the interesting thing about it is that it was at Nina's house that they had the first graduation from Valley College in 1951, outside, along her... it was a fish pond. They didn't have a swimming pool, but there was a little fish pond. And the house was still standing there at the time. And the football coaches, as I understand it, lived at the house for a period of time before the campus was built up and they destroyed the house too. To increase the size of the campus.

Dodson: That could be, I just don't know the answer on that. But I know that we did have a number of houses on that site. Some of which did remain for several years after we purchased that site and moved over there. Did you, by any chance, know any members of the Ciocca family? Who owned a considerable part of that?

Cooley: No, no. I don't remember the name.

Dodson: They had the dairy which occupied the place that is now the administration building now.

Cooley: Chase Dairy?

Dodson: No, the Chase Dairy was a different place, than this Ciocca Dairy.

Cooley: But they had lots of dairies in those days! And then the people would move in and...

Dodson: That's what I understand.

Cooley: ...and complained about the smell of the dairies, so the dairies had to move out! But the big dairy was the Adohr Dairy which is... the entrance to that was just south of Linley Avenue in Reseda. And that was the big dairy, Adohr milk was the milk. We didn't have it. It was certified and it had a pedigree. At my... I guess we just used plain old cow's milk.

Dodson: Ha ha ha... I see.

Boyer: You did happen to mention a Depression during the time you were going to school. How did you feel that the valley was affected by the Depression? In Van Nuys?

Cooley: Well, I'll tell you what happened at our house!

Boyer: Uh hmm.

Cooley: The airport came in... in the end of the 1920's.

Boyer: Is this the Van Nuys Airport?

Cooley: Yes, the Van Nuys Airport. And my father not only lost his shirt, but his tie, and coat, and pants, and everything else and we almost went out. But the creditor came down and looked us over and decided it was alright to keep the credit, it was... the prospects were good. And so they let my father keep his store at that time. But every sundays we used to go out and look at the airplanes and look across at the places where the people didn't pay... and we weren't the only ones. So many of the people in town here lost money in that.

Dodson: I think many people don't realize what a tragedy that Depression was. And how many people were badly affected.

Cooley: Uh hmm. Yeah, I remember them selling apples down the street. Great, big, lovely Washington apples, Red delicious apples for ten cents. And then even that was... it was a treat to have something like that. But in those days you could buy grapes, ten pounds for a quarter.

Dodson: But of course many people were short on the quarters...

Cooley: Yes.

Dodson: ...at that time.

Cooley: Yes, we were.

Dodson: I've been rather interested in what you have told us about the effects of the Long Beach earthquake

in 1933. Nobody else has told us very much about that. Can you tell us a little bit more about how it affected you, what you were doing when the quake struck, and what it did to Van Nuys?

Cooley: My mother and I were at a grocery store, next to the Security Bank, in Van Nuys, at 5:30, at the time the earthquake struck. And we had been trained at school, but when an earthquake was happening that you were supposed to stay underneath a building over... uh, under the...

Boyer: ...?...

Coooley: Yes, under the outside edge so it would protect you in case anything fell. And my mother said no, we should go out to the middle of the street, because that's where everybody else was. So everybody rushed out to the middle of Van Nuys Boulevard, where possibly one of the telephone poles or one of power lines might have fallen off, but didn't. But we went up there and we looked back. There was a music store next to the grocery store, which is about where Maloney's Stationery store is now. And Mr. Nordvold, Adolph Nordvold had a music store there... and big plate glass windows. And they actually waved in the tremor that happened. And it was a very frightening experience.

Dodson: Can you tell us about any of the buildings that were damaged? At the time...? I think you said that both the elementary school and the high school were so damaged that they had to be...

Cooley: That they had to be replaced! And I remember, too,

that all the facings on the building, all the fancy work above the roof... the roofs along the buildings of Van Nuys Boulevard, or any where along the business area, they all had to be taken down. Because all those were the things that fell... fell off the buildings and would've hurt somebody if they had been underneath them.

Dodson: Was your house damaged in the quake?

Cooley: No, no. We lived in a two-story apartment at that time and we weren't damaged. I remember that in other earthquakes, this was before television, of course, and the radio... we'd listen to the radio. The people at the station would say that all of the records had fallen out of the storage places that they had there. And they were just walking around and crushed... records.

Dodson: How did that effects compare with the Sylmar earthquake in this particular area of Van Nuys?

Cooley: The damage here, or at least in the Sylmar area, was much worse, I should think.

Dodsom: Yes, I'm sure it was. But did you feel much in this particular part of Van Nuys?

Cooley: Oh, my!

Dodson: At the time?

Cooley: Oh my yes! It was a minute or so after 6 o'clock. And my husband was ready to leave for work. He works for the water and power. And he said that he

wouldn't be able to do much work downtown at that time, so instead of going to Los Angeles to his office, he went to the office in North Hollywood at Saticoy. And he called back home and he said drop whatever you're doing, go out to the trailer, and take all of the water bottles that you can find and fill them with cold water right away! Drop everything, go right away! So that's what we did and we had water to drink and to cook with after the earthquake. Where other people... bottled water was the thing to do, then. Everybody had bottled water because it wasn't safe .

Dodson: Were you living in this house, at the time?

Cooley: Yes. We've lived here 21 years.

Dodson: I see. Was your water cut off here?

Cooley: No, it wasn't cut off. No, the electricity was out for a while but the water was all dirty.

Dodson: Oh, I see.

Cooley: So, but we had all these bottles that were full of water, safe.

Dodson: Was your house itself damaged in any way?

Cooley: None, none.

Dodson: And you didn't have the furniture knocked over?

Cooley: No, the stereo and things, they were sitting up on the mantle... and they fell off. But that was all. There wasn't anything broken. It was a twisting

uh, shake... as I recall it. And it was frightening and yet I always... I ran down the hall and said it's only an earthquake to tell the children that everything's allright. It's only an earthquake... ha ha... and yet it really was.

Dodson: Then strangely enough, Van Nuys must've been damaged more by the Long Beach quake than the Sylmar quake. Is that correct?

Cooley: Yes. Yes, because since the Long Beach earthquake in 1933, they had different building regulations that we had to make them safer. So that the damage it might not have been so bad in 1933, if the building regulations had been stricter.

Dodson: I see. Then of course we had one or two other earthquakes between the intervals of those two. There was the Tehachapi quake. Did you feel that one?

Cooley: Oh yes, I've atte-ded all the quakes. Ha ha ha...

Dodson: Including the new one comeing up? That we hear about?

Cooley: Today, yes, today. I'm sure there was one about two ....?.... But it wasn't a bad one, it was just a little shake.

Dodson: Well, we hear about the possibility of a really severe one and the possibility that the Palmdale bulge was a poor warner of it. Does it bother you? Are you worried about it?

Cooley: No. I am not worried about it.

Dodson: I think this has been true of other people we've interviewed. I think they know about the predictions but there's nothing they could do about it and they don't worry much about it.

Cooley No, what can you do? So... you just wait and we'll see when it gets here. My aunt went through the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco.

Dodson: Well is that right? Well you know, I have interviewed a few people who were living in the valley in 1906. And I've been amazed to find that they felt that quake here in the valley.

Cooley: I didn't know that.

Dodson: I was surprised that one as far away as that could be felt, but they assured me that they did feel it down here... in 1906. Which shows how intense that must have been in the San Francisco area!

Cooley: And then they don't say anything about the earthquake at all, they just blamed everything on the fire!

Dodson: Yes, yes that's true. Do you feel that the floods that we've had in the valley have really damaged it more than earthquakes?

Cooley Yes, very much more.

Dodson: Most people don't know much about the floods. They know about the earthquakes. We had a flood in 1938 did we not?

Cooley: We had a terrible flood in 1938, very much, I be-

lieve.

Dodson: And you remember that, do you?

Cooley: Oh, yes.

Dodson: Could you tell us a little bit about that? As you recall it.

Cooley: Well, the reason why the damage was so bad is because the rivers... we had the big and little Tujunga and I'm not sure just which one is which. But in between us and North Hollywood... Van Nuys and North Hollywood, there was a screen bed which is now cemented in. And also one over there which is near the Golden State Freeway near North Hollywood. And that was another wash over there. And one time, my father got caught in one of those washes. The car was washed off of the road. He got out of the car, and carried his shoes and his coat up in the air and managed to get out. But he said that if he had ever missed a step, that he would have just gone down. And later they went back and dug the car out it was about tender deep in sand. But it's a terrible thing to have all these water, and no place to put it. Since then, they have built these channels that aren't things of beauty, but they are certainly utilitarian.

Dodson: Uh hmm.

Cooley: The... uhm, green... the sewer pipes... the uh, what do they call it? the green pipes, that go down to the river... that's all been put in since that time, too. Because, before that, they didn't have... the water would just run down the street,

it didn't have any place to go. And we lived... uh, in 1938, this was before we were married. We lived down Friar Street and uhm, the river ran down Van Nuys Boulevard. In fact, it ran down all of the north and south street to the river. It washes out the bridges! It's really a terrible thing but it's kind of exciting at the time. And it's kind of fun. Mr. Arnold Leveen who had a hardware store in our block, in between Friar and Sylvan, on Van Nuys Boulevard, had a boat sitting in front of his store. And he was sitting in his boat, and we have a picture of Arnold looking... And that was in the 1938 flood that the... the... Tyrone and Hazeltine, all those streets were... were just rivers. The curb, top of the curb, to the curb... sometimes lower than the curb. After we were married, we lived on Tyrone... along the banks of the Tyrone River.

Boyer: Ha ha ha...

Cooley: And part of the time the rain would send the water, the water would come up over the sidewalks. Fortunately, there were two steps up to the house. We lived very near the sidewalk, but it was two steps up into the house so that we were safe. It, it really is frightening. And to go to Van Nuys Elementary, er... Van Nuys Grammar School at that time, they would put sandbags out in the middle of Tyrone. And boards across for the people to walk from Hazeltine Way down to the center of Van Nuys. The children could get across to the school after the floods have subsided somewhat. And in case of a big extra... a big rain, or a storm, at that time you could hear the boards would go out or the

lanterns that they had strung along there so the cars wouldn't go down. They had... you could hear them bouncing along, and off they were down... going down to the river.

Dodson: All of that, I imagine, have been repaired now or rather, corrected.

Cooley: Yes they have.

Dodson: I think we have no floods in the 70's, have we? Or excessively high water?

Cooley: No, not lately. Since they have the cement channels for the river, that uhm, it's eliminated most of the trouble, no.

Boyer: Besides some of the plans that you were talking about changing some of the flood control channels, what else have happened in the valley that's changed the appearance of the valley? Since you've been here? Or to Van Nuys?

Cooley: The things that's changed is that the business have moved away. Stores have moved, since they had the big shopping center out on Panorama City, the Van Nuys stores have just gone down until there's practically nothing left. And I'd say that what used to be a nice city, we now specialize in pawn shops, bail bonds, and uh...well....

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Dodson: Now you were telling us about the changes in Van Nuys, the business district particularly, Mrs. Cooley?

Cooley: Yes, it's no longer the nice homey place that Van Nuys used to be. There used to be lovely homes along Van Nuys Boulevard, beautiful homes! And when the business came, they moved the homes. Sometimes bodily out and sometimes just tore them down. But there used to be real lovely, real nice homes along Van Nuys Boulevard!

Dodson: That would be news to many people who don't associate Van Nuys Boulevard with a residential area.

Cooley: No, that was... that was... And this was way out, we were way north. Uh, the business area is... it really centers on Sylvan, between Sylvan and Victory and Van Nuys Boulevard. But this was way north. We don't feel that it's north now because we're here. But when we moved to this area and that was thirty years ago that we moved down here by Van Nuys High School. The place where Vons parking place is now, was the... the Whitsett home was around that area, behind Vons but just about in that line. And they had a big orange grove that filled in all that block between Vesper and Van Nuys Boulevard. And it was lovely!

Dodson: And then you feel that there's been a further development in that the shopping center have injured the business along Van Nuys?

Cooley: I certainly do, yes. Yes, the shopping centers have moved out. And the interesting thing is that when we came here in 1924, Panorama City was called Mission Acres. And the thing that they got the Panorama from was that it was the Panorama Dairy out there. And that was a huge, huge dairy. Shortly

just after we have come, they were having a hoof and mouth disease plague. And when you drive through that area, you would have to get out, drive through this squishy, squishy stuff to get the tires all covered, and then you'd have to get out and walk on a plank thing and let disinfectant swish over the bottom of your shoes. And that was, uhm, I haven't seen anything like that in Portland, so that made a big impression on me.

Dodson: Did most of the cows in the valley have to be slaughtered then? To stop that?

Cooley: Yes, I understand that's what happened to them.

Dodson: I see. I know it's very difficult to control that disease, once it starts among cattle. Can you tell us anything about your impressions on fashions and how they've changed? Now, you're in a good position to judge there, since you were a child, or rather, a teenager in the valley and you've had children of your own.

Cooley: Things are different, yes. In the old days, nobody wore slacks. Girls never wore slacks, we wore dresses. No matter what the occasion was, we wore dresses.

Dodson: This would be 20's and 30's, right?

Cooley: Yes, oh yes. And I think the only kind of pant thing that I ever had on, was a beach... some kind of a beach pajama thing. But I never had any pair of pants in my life!

Dodson: So no girls ever wore them to school or anything like that?

Cooley: Oh, heavens, no!

Boyer: Ha ha ha... They didn't even wear them at school when I was a small kid!

Dodson: Ha ha ha...

Cooley: And when we'd have gym class, we had black bloomers. We had black cotton stockings that came up over our knees, and these knickers that came down over the top of these stockings! And it... we were really classy people!

[laughter]

Cooley: And nowadays the uh... well things are considerably different. I try to bring up my girls to wear oxfords, because they're good for your feet. And "Mother" wasn't really with it, ha ha ha... they let me know that I've just ruin their lives... ha ha ha...

Dodson: Did you disprove on the sort of costume they wore, then?

Cooley: No, we all did. We all wore them.

Dodson: No, I mean your daughters, when they went to school.

Cooley: Oh, oh! Yes, we had a little different point of view then, between the different generations... quite a gap!

Dodson: Ha ha ha... I see.

Cooley: One of the reasons why is because our first boy, he's 38 years old now, and our second child is a girl and she's 25, you see. And by this time, people ...I've even been thought of, right to my face! that "this is your grandchild" and I think that the children have felt that too. That I'm an older generation, not just mother.

Dodson: Have you been conscious of other differences? Were you under stricter control as to what time you came in in the evening than your daughters have been, would you say?

Cooley: Oh my, yes. Yes... The uh... But we didn't really, we didn't really... there wasn't that much to do. Not much to get into, you see. I suppose that back in my days, Mulholland is the same Mulholland it still is. That you went up there to neck or whatever. They called it necking in my days, they call it other things nowadays.

Dodson: We'll have to ask Paula for an expert's opinion on that... ha ha ha...

Boyer: I don't know... ha ha ha...

Dodson: Just for the records, in case Paula's remarks didn't carry, she said she's not familiar with those things.

[Laughter]

Boyer: I don't think you should put that!

[laughter]

Dodson: But you feel that there had been changes, then, in the uh, general morality and that sort of thing with the passage of time?

Cooley: I suppose that things went on when I was a kid, but I just didn't know about it. Ha ha ha...

Dodson: Well, one thing that everyone has agreed on is that the use of narcotics was practically unknown among high school students.

Cooley: Yes.

Dodson: Say in the 20's and 30's.

Cooley: Well, I'll tell you. If you got caught smoking a cigarette, it was twenty demerits! which was terrible! And now nobody thinks anything of it...

Dodson: So that has been a very definite change?

Cooley: Yes.

Dodson: And of course the fact that narcotics were unknown, practically, at that time. And not exactly unknown now would be another drastic change?

Cooley: Yes.

Dodson: Can you think of anything about fads that have come and gone among young people? Along the passage of time? Or among the older ones, either, for that matter. Do you know of any fads that were popular in the valley at one time or another, that are not popular now?

Cooley: No, I can't think of any... Like what?

Dodson: Well, of course I can think of some of the things that were true of college students of the past. Like the fad of swallowing a live goldfish?

Cooley: Goldfish, oh how disgusting.

Dodson: And how many people you could stuff into a telephone booth, and that sort of thing.

Cooley: No, I don't think we did anything like that. That was when I went to college. That... swallowing the goldfish. Yeah, I didn't take part in it. I didn't like fish cooked!

Boyer: Much less raw, right?

[laughter]

Dodson; Ha ha ha... You have no taste for live goldfish, no?

Cooley: No, no, I'm afraid not.

Boyer: Can I ask you what you think about the valley... seceding from Los Angeles? There's been some talk about that.

Cooley: There has certainly been a lot of talk about that. And I've been wondering about this busing situation, if that's going to lead to secession from Los Angeles.

Dodson: I'd wondered myself whether that would cause more disatisfaction that might affect it.

Cooley: I'm sure, yes. I'm sure that the people who are in favor of seceding are thinking of things like that, because they are so infuriated, frustrated, what else can they do? It's either move out or get out their own school system.

Dodson: How do you feel about it yourself? Do you favor busing or are you opposed?

Cooley: I am opposed.

Dodson: Well that's pretty much in line of what other people have told us about it.

Cooley: I think it's most unfortunate. It's unfortunate for the kids, it's unfortunate for the teachers, it's unfortunate for education in general.

Dodson: Uh hmm. Do you have any solutions, yourself, in mind to meet the various conflicting opinions on this thing? Anything that might satisfy reasonable people, at least, is not extremist?

Cooley: My husband and I went to court, recently. He is interested in the court referral system whereby first offenders are sometimes let... uh, do volunteer work instead of paying a fine or doing time, in jail. So we had gone down there, it was absolutely amazing to see how many Mexicans had been arrested. Many of them did not speak English and I was wondering if part of the problem here is the illegal aliens.

Dodson: Uh hmm.

Cooley: Because, everybody knows that... that there are so many people here who are here, illegally. These people had been driving, drunk driving or driving without a license. And I think the valley is full of these illegal Mexicans. And that has caused some problems in that they'll work cheaper if they can get a job. And it's attitude of welfare roles and that burns up the people who are taxpayers. What are we going to do?

Dodson: Have there been many racial tension, or much racial tension in the valley, in your opinion, in the past?

Cooley: Yes. Yes, there has. We had the riot over in Van Nuys High School, a year ago, or a year and a half ago. And living here, away from Van Nuys High School, I didn't know why the helicopter was going around and around. But we found out later that it all started because somebody had thrown a carton of milk at somebody else. All these tensions had built up so that everybody was at everybody else. So it doesn't take much to start something if there's been a smoldering in the background.

Dodson: You feel that there's been some smoldering of tensions of little things that erupts so that a little thing like that could set it off?

Cooley: Oh my, yes. Yes, yes. And when I was younger, they didn't have all these, the Mexicans, that were all over. They were down in the ghetto, and I'm not saying that's the place to keep them, but now since the fair housing has come about they are everywhere. And, uh, they don't agree with the blacks, and then you don't get along with the whites, and then the

whites don't get along with the blacks, and nobody gets along with anybody else! Some of us try, and but it gets to a fearful situation.

Dodson: You feel that in the valley, the tensions have been between the Mexican-American group and the whites primarily rather than the whites and the blacks?

Cooley: No, the blacks and the browns.

Dodson: I see. You feel that has been the principal problems?

Cooley: Yes. And that hasn't been but just recently, here. Because we didn't have very many negroes.

Dodson: Uh hmm. I don't know anything about statistics. I don't know how large the black population of the valley is, myself, so I don't know. Are there very many black students at Van Nuys High School, to your knowledge?

Cooley: They are bussed in. There are some here in Van Nuys, but there are at least one bus load, bussed in here, that I know of. ....?.... that I know, that they come in. If you want to turn that off, I'll show you something.

Dodson: You were telling us about a bandstand that once existed here, Mrs. Cooley, can you add something to that?

Cooley: When I was a little girl, we lived on Friar Street, and behind us was the building which is now the fire department. But at that time it was the city hall and the police department, the fire department, the library was upstairs. Everything was all right

there in one building. Across the street, where the city hall now stands, there was a bandstand. An octagonal, lovely, old-fashioned bandstand where they used to have concerts. And any chautauqua and church groups that came to town would put up a tent next to this bandstand, and that would be the meeting place. So it was uhm, that was the central part of town.

Dodson: And I think you told us that you have some price comparisons to give us.

Cooley: Now this...

Dodson: Our prices in the past...

Cooley: When we lived on Tyrone, this was a duplex. We lived next door to the landlord and landlady. It was $32.50 a month for a two bedroom apartment, which was very nice. And it included a garage. I kept track of some of the prices of things. In July 1943, which was modern... I thought I had kept track of some of the older prices... Bread in 1943, was 10¢ a loaf. Milk, for two quarts, was 27¢. Ice cream quart was 43¢, lettuce was two heads for 7¢. In August 1943, the gas bill... which was... we heated with gas, and we cooked with gas, the bill was $1.57. The Los Angeles Times was $1.50 a month, the telephone bill was $2.92. A doctor's office call was $3.00. A boy's haircut was 65¢, and a hair shampoo and set was 50¢. A permanent was $6.50. A Christmas tree $2.00. At one time, we bought a lug of tomatoes and three cantaloupes, $1.70. In 1946, in July, bread was up to 16¢, permanent, up to $8.50. Milk, two quarts for 33¢. In 1951, when we had another baby, a

dozen Curity diapers, $3.95. We bought a love seat in 1949, $150, a rocker and an ottoman was $92.18. The piano and the bench, over here, $480.24. We had a hook rug and pad, it was 9 by 12, for $161. A Kenmore washer was $267. In 1957, here, we have carpeting. It was all wool, we had the dining room, living room, and the hallway carpeted, all wool carpeted, for $131.31. In 1944, when our first born went to school, he wore a size 5, 10 corduroy $3.85. And in June 1958, we bought a Sears sofa for $226.67. And that's what I have put down.

Dodson: Could you tell us something about how wages went during those same years that you've given the prices for? So that we can compare.

Cooley: When my husband got out of the navy in 1938, he started working as a service station attendant, in Studio City, $15 a week. And he provided his own uniforms. Then he had a service station of his own which is on the northeast corner of Magnolia and Van Nuys Boulevard. And he did very well there. Gasoline, back in 1938-39 in that area, the price was 12.5 to 15 cents a gallon. He had studied welding while he was in the navy and he wanted to get into welding at Lockheed. But he couldn't get in, it was one of those that you couldn't get a job unless you belong to the union. But you couldn't belong to the union unless you have a job, and so there you have it! Ha ha ha...

Dodson: Ha ha ha... I've heard of things like that.

Cooley: So in 1940, in November, he began at Lockheed as a riveter and he'd gone to school. He was getting

51¢ an hour. In 1949, January 26th, that's the day of the big snow storm? The last big snow storm. He started working in the water and power, and he was a welder. He had got into welding by this time. And that was the... he was supposed to be down in a hole, digging and welding. And this hole that was full of snow, on his first day of work. So, things have changed considerably.

Dodson: Paula, I think you had a question?

Boyer: Well, I was just wondering what you might regard as the most important event in the valley history? Or Van Nuys?

Cooley: Perhaps those natural uhm... catastrophes, such as the flood and the earthquakes. I think that's made more effect on the people.

Boyer: Was there anything that's ever happened in the valley that has brought you to your sadness? Or wrath?

Cooley: No, not me, not our family.

Dodson: I was going to ask whether there was anything that you feel should be recorded that we haven't asked about at all? Some important event, or anecdote, that you recall?

Cooley: I think I've covered...covered pretty much everything I could think of.

Boyer: What about... you were mentioning about the snow, what date was that again?

Cooley: I think it was the 26th of January. And we really had a good snow that day. We had, we have snow only in the... I think it snowed a little bit since we've lived here, and that was within 21 years. But we lived across the way, over here, about a block to the south on the corner of Kester and Kittridge. And this time it snowed that night, and I woke up Skip, our older boy. And I said, get up, I want you to see snow! So several times during the night I would get him up to see the snow because I was afraid in the morning it would be gone. It was really a good snow. And real wet, the telephone lines fell down and trees broke, and things like that. But uhm, it was an exciting time and it was beautiful! We all loved it. The kids were crazy about it because a lot of them never been in snow. I know one thing that I wanted to tell you about. In the old days, Victory Boulevard... and I don't think it was called Victory in those days, had pepper trees all the way along... from Hazeltine down to Kester. Anyways, it covered over the street and it was gorgeous. But in the progress, so-called, they took them, cut them all down, and widen the street. And now you have a big boulevard and no greenery along there.

Dodson: Of course that's typical of what frequently happened. We have old pictures of our old college campus, before it was leveled for the buildings.

Cooley: Yes...

Dodson: It's surprising how many trees we once had there!

Cooley: I think it's a crime.

Dodson: I think we have exactly one left. At least one is shown in the old picture, that we still have. But the others are all gone.

Cooley: But you have those lovely eucalyptus trees down near the museum building.

Dodson: Yes, but I think there's only one, as I recall. No, there's several! I have to take that back, there's several.

Boyer: ....?.... that the man thought was a ...?...

Dodson: Uh hmm.

Cooley: Well you can't grow up a tree just overnight!

Dodson: No, no, that's probably true. While we were told by one person that there's only one left, I think that's probably wrong. There are several.

Cooley: Yeah, because those eucalyptus trees, they grow fast but they don't grow that fast.

Boyer: Yeah...

Dodson: But most of them were leveled for the permanent building, so there's not very much left.

Cooley: Yes, it's a crime... so spoil the trees.

Dodson: Can you tell us about any long, other long-term residents in the valley that you think we should interview?

Cooley: Oh, many! There are many.

Dodson: Then perhaps I'll turn off the tape and you can give Paula the addresses. We are certainly grateful to you for what you've done for us. Thank you, Mrs. Cooley.

You have been listening to an interview with Mrs. Marjorie Cooley. The interview was conducted by Miss Paula Boyer, field deputy of the Los Angeles Valley College Historical Museum, and by Dr. James L. Dodson, curator of the museum. The date is February 26, 1977.